

The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management anticipates participating in a nationwide effort of surveillance of wild birds for avian influenza, particularly HPAI H5N1. RI DEM Division of Fish & Wildlife will use a variety of methods to sample birds and will work cooperatively with designated laboratories to have those samples tested. The state will work with federal agencies and the local media to inform the public of positive detections of HPAI H5N1.

How to Protect Yourself?

To date, there has been no documentation of people becoming infected by the HPAI H5N1 virus through contact with wild bird species. Nor have humans been documented as being able to transmit the virus from person to person. Nevertheless, both of these situations are possible and safety precautions must take place to reduce these events from happening.

DEM has some basic safety tips on sanitation, such as **properly washing your hands**, and what you should do if you encounter a morbid or dead wild bird.

Do not feed waterfowl - it's against the law! This seemingly harmless activity results in overcrowding, spread of disease, malnutrition, and habitat degradation. In addition, artificially high concentrations of birds can result in degraded water quality.

Do not be concerned if you see a dead bird. Birds die every day, from many different causes. Leave it alone. If you **MUST** remove it, use at minimum gloves and a shovel, bury it or double bag it, and put it in your regular trash. DEM is not collecting dead birds. Of course, if you see a large number of dead birds that would be unusual, you should call DEM at 789-0281 Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. or, at night or on weekends, DEM's Division of Law Enforcement's 24-hour complaint line at 222-3070.

Waterfowl hunters should follow simple precautions including the following:

- Do not handle or butcher game animals that are obviously sick or are found dead.
- Do not eat, drink, or smoke while cleaning game.
- Wear rubber gloves and washable clothing when cleaning game.
- Wash your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based gel immediately after handling game.
- Wash tools and working surfaces with soap and water, then disinfect with a 10% solution of chlorine bleach.
- Cook game meat thoroughly—reaching an internal temperature of 165°F.

More information can be found on the following websites: www.nwhc.usgs.gov; www.cdc.gov www.fws.gov/migratorybird;

For further information, call DEM's Division of Agriculture at 222-2781, press zero, and ask for the animal health section.

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Avian Influenza In Wild Birds



Current Status & General Facts

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Avian influenza (AI), less formally known as bird flu, is endemic in wild bird populations, particularly in waterfowl and shorebirds. There are 144 theoretical subtypes of avian influenza, named for their protein components hemagglutinin (H) and neuraminidase (N). Low pathogenic and non-pathogenic influenza result in zero to low morbidity and minimal mortality. Most often wild birds are infected with these forms and show little or no sign of illness. Conversely, highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) is highly virulent, often resulting in high morbidity and mortality.

HPAI H5N1 has persisted in Asia since at least 1997. Asian H5N1, as it is commonly referred to, has established in domestic poultry populations in Asia. The recent emergence of this strain has caused reason for concern in both domestic and wild bird populations. Avian encounters with HPAI H5N1 have resulted in many deaths among both poultry and wild birds. Currently, greater than 80 wild birds have been documented as infected by H5N1.



How is avian influenza transmitted?

Avian influenza is released naturally through the intestinal tracts of birds. The principle means of transmission of AI among bird species is through secretions and feces. Furthermore, the virus can remain viable in water, especially at colder temperatures.

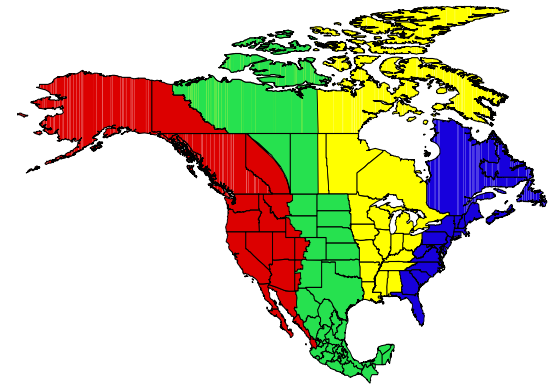
The prevalence of avian influenza varies depending on species. In waterfowl, AI peaks in wild birds during late summer and early fall. Infection rates tend to be lower outside of those periods.

How will HPAI H5N1 enter the United States?

Although HPAI H5N1 has not been detected in North America, it is very likely that it will. There are multiple points of entry, including but not limited to, poultry, illegal poultry and poultry product trade, humans (e.g., manure on shoes), and migratory birds. It is likely that migratory birds could be a point of entry for HPAI H5N1.

Many species of birds exhibit a phenomenon known as migration where they fly long distances between breeding and wintering grounds. In general, there are four major migratory routes or flyways

that birds travel in North America: Pacific, Central, Mississippi, and Atlantic.



Movements of some species of migratory birds are intercontinental between areas such as Asia and North America. It is possible that upon returning to Alaskan breeding grounds after wintering in Asia an infected individual could commingle with birds that may migrate throughout continental North America. This pattern could result in the spread of HPAI H5N1 in the U.S.

Conceptual Map of Major Worldwide Flyways

